

**Canadian
Agricultural
Safety Week
Mar. 11-17,
2009**

FACT SHEET #2

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

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Keep an eye for safety

Eye injuries in the workplace – including farms - are very common. Nearly three out of five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of the incident. Wearing the right eye protection can reduce the severity or even prevent 90 per cent of all eye injuries concludes an American study by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

“PPE only works if you use it!” is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on the use, fit and access of personal protective equipment (PPE) in agriculture. The yearlong campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), from March 11 to 17, 2009. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) deliver CASW in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

“The day to day work in agriculture is very diverse,” says Ron Bonnet, CFA Second VP. “That diversity is part of the appeal for farmers and ranchers - and part of the danger. It is imperative that producers keep the safety of themselves, their families and their workers top-of-mind at all times.”

Flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye cause almost 70 per cent of eye injuries states the OSHA study; and often the injurious particle is smaller than a pinhead. Another 20 per cent of injuries are from contact with chemicals, which in agriculture could include anything from cleaning solutions to pesticides to anhydrous ammonia fertilizer.

In addition to eye trauma injuries, livestock handlers may be at risk of acquiring infectious diseases via ocular exposure. Infectious diseases can be transmitted through mucous membranes of the eye as a result of direct exposure to dust, blood splashes, respiratory droplets generated during coughing, and a host of other sources.

“Use, fit and access are key elements to eye protection,” explains Bonnet. “Keeping the correct kind of eye protection near hazardous work areas in a variety of sizes and styles makes it easier to work safely. And most importantly – lead by example.”

There are three key actions you can do to help prevent an eye injury. First, know the eye safety dangers at work by completing an eye hazard assessment. Second, eliminate hazards before starting work by using machine guarding, work screens, or other engineering controls. And finally, use proper eye protection.

The type of safety eye protection you should wear depends on the hazards in your workplace. If you are working in an area that has particles, flying objects, or dust, you must at least wear safety glasses with side protection (side shields). If you are working with chemicals, you should wear goggles. If you are working near hazardous radiation (welding, lasers, or fibre optics) you must use special-purpose safety glasses, goggles, face shields, or helmets designed for that task.

Safety eyewear should be worn whenever there is a chance of eye injury and that includes anyone working in or passing through the hazardous area.

The CFA along with FCC, CASA and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers that “*PPE only works if you use it!*”

- 30 -

*** Free photos and cartoons are available to accompany this article at www.casa-acsa.ca .

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